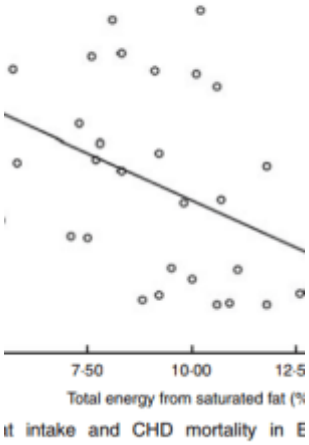

Meat, Saturated Fat, and Long Life

Mainstream health authorities have told us for decades that we should eat less meat, and replace it with carbohydrates, but are they right? Let's take a look at the relation between meat, saturated fat, and long life.

Countries that eat meat, and those that don't

Meat consumption varies tremendously by country.

Hong Kong

The country with the world's highest meat consumption appears to be Hong Kong, according to the National Geographic. (Although Hong Kong isn't a self-governing nation, but an administrative district.)

From National Geographic:

> Hong Kong consumes more meat per person – both calorically and in weight – than any other nation. At 695 grams per day, people in Hong Kong eat 60% more meat than the next-highest meat eaters in New Zealand.

Hong Kong is also number three in the world in per capita beef consumption, so their meat isn't just chicken or seafood.

Together with China and Macao, Hong Kong is fourth in the world in per capita pork consumption.

If our health authorities are right, then people in Hong Kong should be dropping like flies from heart disease and cancer.

But they're not.

The WHO lists Japan as having the world's highest life expectancy, at 83.7 years. But as noted, since Hong Kong is not a country, it doesn't appear on their list.

But Hong Kong now has a life expectancy of 84.3 years – 81.3 for men, and 87.3 for women. It appears to be the world's highest.

India

India has the second lowest per capita meat consumption in the world. The only country lower for which there's data is Bangladesh.

Yet cardiovascular diseases are epidemic in India. They accounted for 32% of adult deaths from 2010 to 2013. The figure for the U.S. is 23.4%.

India has a life expectancy of 68.3 years.

Now, there are obviously lots of differences between countries like Hong Kong and India, mainly wealth and poverty, which leads to widely differing standards of medical care.

But if meat were the cause of cardiovascular disease, it seems unlikely that India would have a high rate, while Hong Kong has the world's longest life expectancy.

India should have a low rate of cardiovascular disease, given its low meat consumption.

What could be causing high CVD rates in India? In addition to higher rates of smoking (22% among Indian men, compared to about 17% in U.S. men):

> The epidemic of sedentariness has penetrated rural households with rapidly increasing use of labor-saving technologies. Dietary habits have undergone a see change with greater consumption of fats, saturated fats, trans fats, and processed foods. Calorie-dense fast foods (comfort foods) are easily available and both Indian-style and Western-style fast foods are being consumed widely. (Source.)

So, less physical activity might be one cause.

But also, greater consumption of processed foods, high in sugar, seed oils, and refined carbohydrates.

None of these have anything to do with meat consumption, which is low in India.

This is some evidence for my contention that the main causes of cardiovascular disease are cigarettes, seed oils, and sugar. Not meat or saturated fat.

In addition, carbohydrates are associated with cardiovascular disease, and saturated fat is not.

France has the highest consumption of saturated fat, and has the lowest rate of cardiovascular disease. Switzerland has the second highest consumption of saturated fat, and has the second lowest CVD mortality.

Switzerland also has the second highest life expectancy of any country. France stands at number 7.

The PURE study, which tracked data from countries that spanned a great range of income, including India and Pakistan, as well as countries like Canada and Sweden (high income) and Poland and Turkey (middle income), found the results presented below.

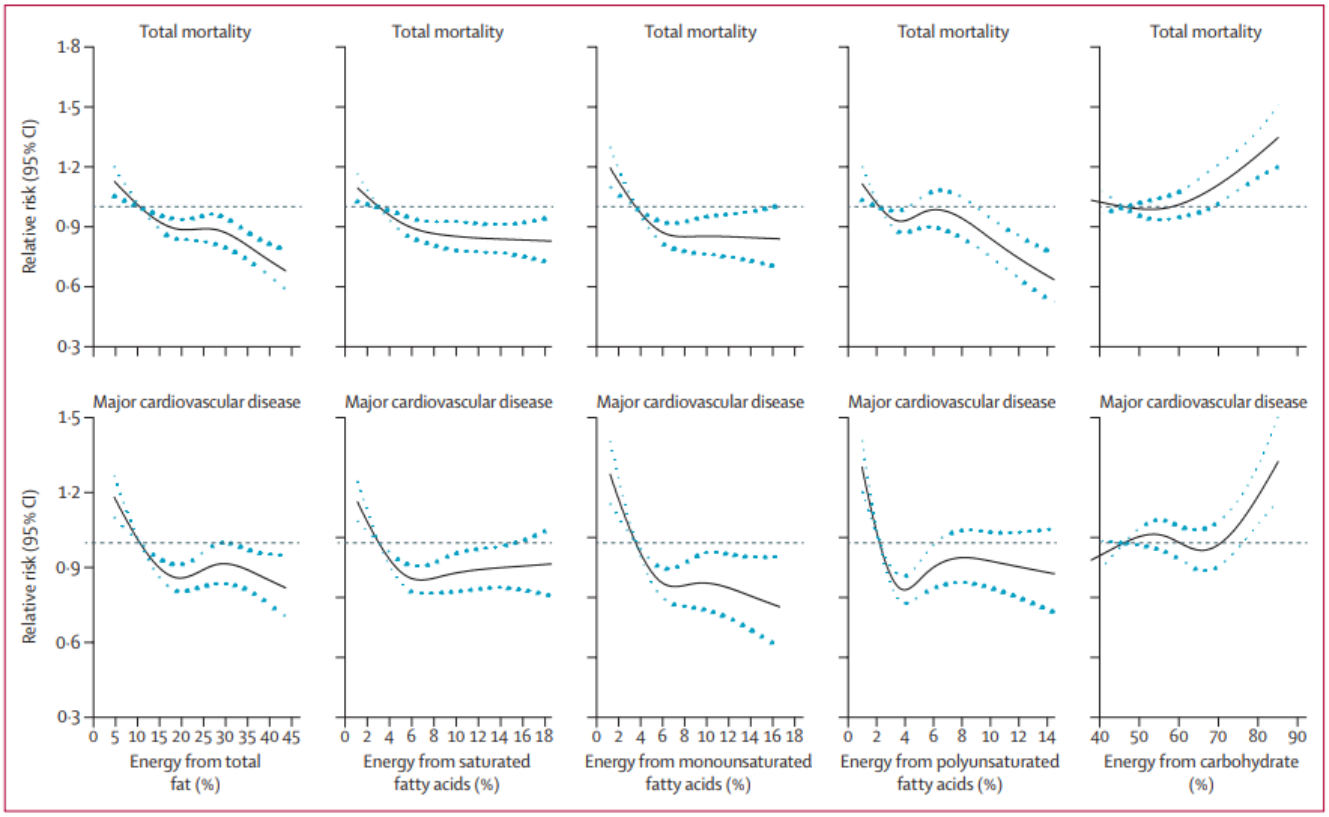

Figure 1: **Association between estimated percentage energy from nutrients and total mortality and major cardiovascular disease (n=135 335)**
Adjusted for age, sex, education, waist-to-hip ratio, smoking, physical activity, diabetes, urban or rural location, centre, geographical regions, and energy intake. Major cardiovascular disease=fatal cardiovascular disease+myocardial infarction+stroke+heart failure.

The more saturated fat people ate, the lower their rates of CVD and the lower their total mortality. The more carbohydrates they ate, the higher their rates of CVD and total mortality.

In Europe alone, the situation with regard to saturated fat and CVD death rates is as follows (source):

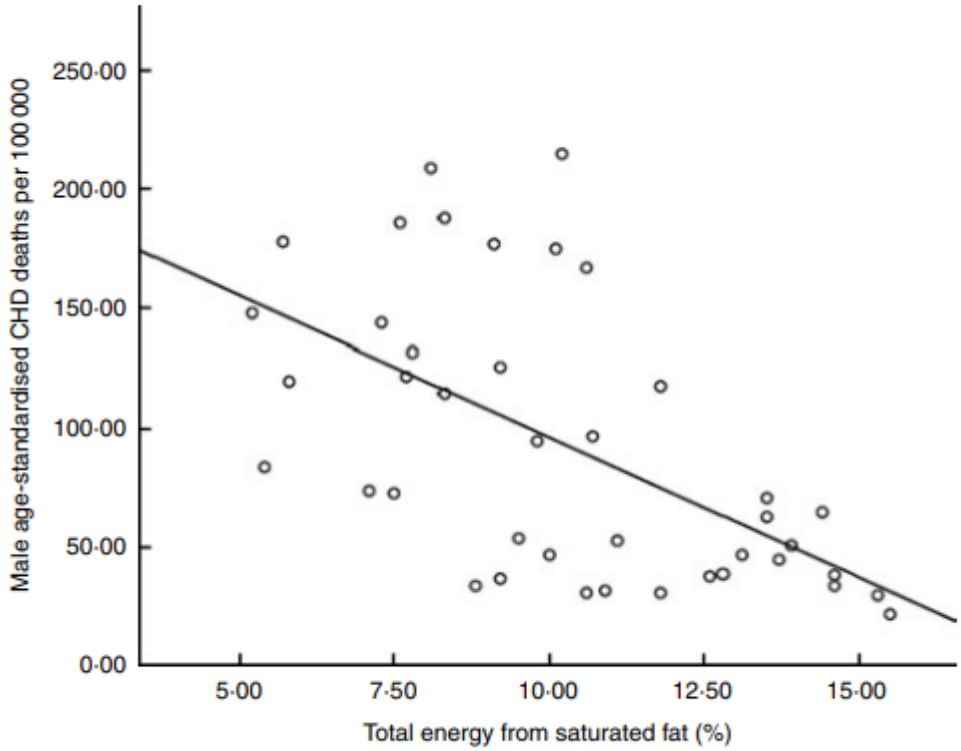

Fig. 1. Saturated fat intake and CHD mortality in Europe (1998). R^2 linear = 0·339.

The more saturated fat that Europeans ate, the lower their rate of cardiovascular death.

Another European study found that total animal fat and protein intake were highly and negatively correlated to cardiovascular mortality. (Source.)

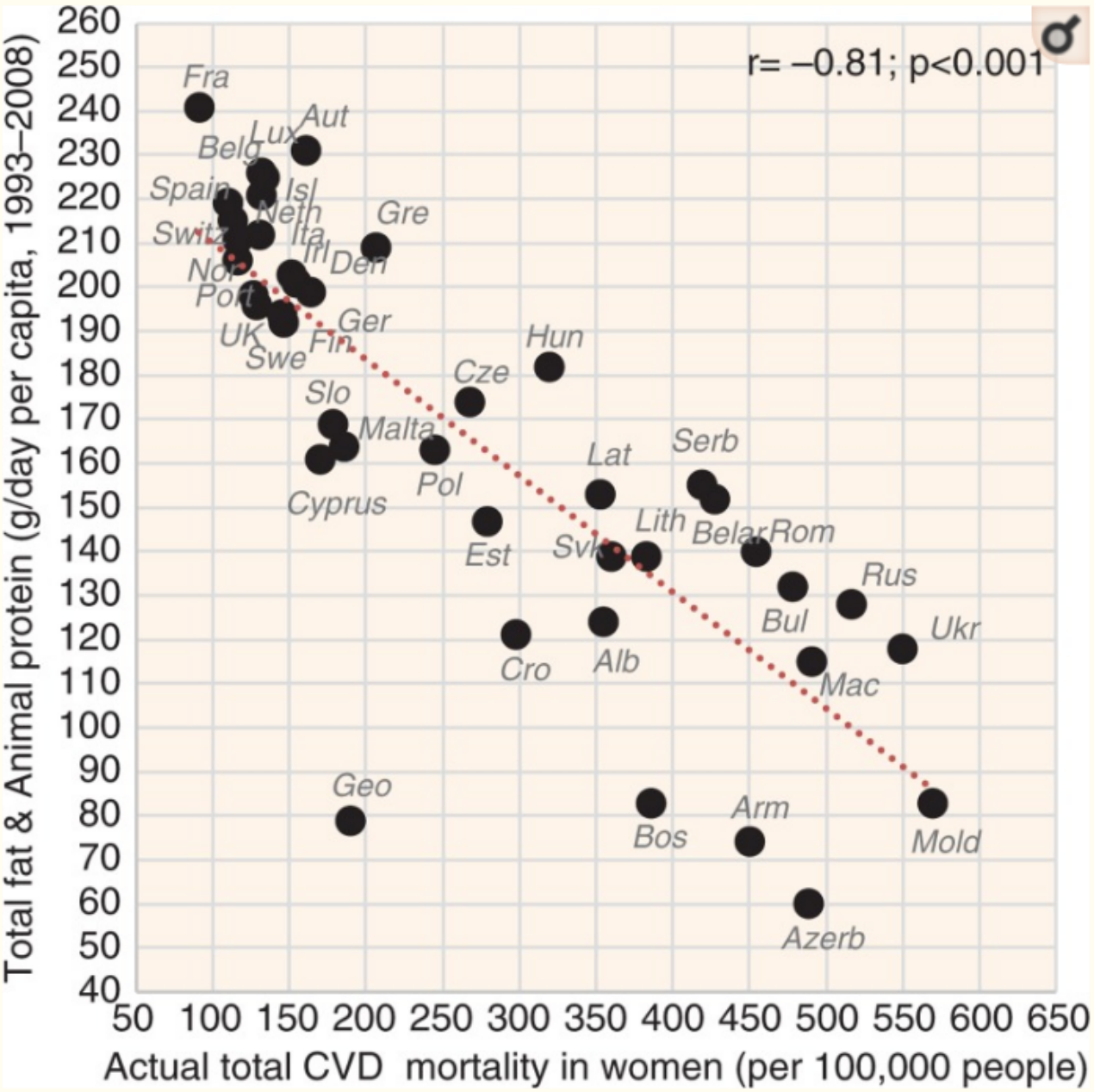

Fig. 7

Correlation between the mean daily consumption of total fat and animal protein and the actual total CVD mortality in women (r=−0.81; p<0.001).

Conclusion

Saturated fat consumption is not associated with increased cardiovascular disease rates or death rates, but lower rates.

Hong Kong has the world's highest meat consumption, and the highest life expectancy. The people of India eat little meat, and have a high rate of cardiovascular disease.

While the evidence presented above is illustrative or associational only, and

not 100% conclusive, it pokes a serious hole in the mainstream “plant-based” dogma that meat is unhealthy.

Meat is in fact healthy, as is saturated fat.

The real dietary culprits of our current epidemic of bad health and obesity are seed oils, sugar, and refined carbohydrates.

Why don’t scientists and doctors see this?

Perhaps they do see it, but don’t change their opinions or practices because:

1. Money: statins are a multi-billion dollar business, and doctors have been trained to prescribe them. Lowering cholesterol has become the focal point for much of modern medicine.
2. Saving face: they’ve preached the benefits of low-fat, low-meat, and high carbohydrate diets for decades now, and to admit they’re wrong would mean losing face, and prestige.